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[NOT PUBLISHED.]

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

IN THE

UNITED STATES:

THEIR VIEWS OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY QUESTION, AND TREATMENT
OF THE PEOPLE OF COLOUR.

COMPILED FROM ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE.

DARLINGTON:

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INTRODUCTION.

THE documents contained in the subsequent pages, owe their present degree of publicity, to a solemn and overpowering conviction upon the mind of the individual into whose possession they came, that the interests of truth, and the cause of humanity require, that facts so startling, and, if true, so deeply affecting the character of Friends in America, should be made known to the Members of the Society on this side of the Atlantic ; more especially, as great stress is also laid upon the hurtful tendency of the course of late years pursued by ministers from England,* visiting the United States, and the salutary influence of remonstrances sent from this country.

The information now given, and much more of a corroborative character, has been forwarded to England, in consequence of a wish having been expressed by individuals, to ascertain, if possible, what amount of credit was due to a variety of painful reports, respecting the conduct of American Friends upon the Anti-Slavery question, and their treatment of the People of Colour.

The individual in this country, who is responsible for the appearance of the following pages, is conscious of no desire to bring unfounded charges against Friends in the United States : or, to make known, unnecessarily, existing defects and inconsistencies ; or, to call in question the faithfulness and integrity of those who have paid religious visits to America ; or, to witness a relaxation of the strict and wholesome discipline of the Society ; or, a compromise of any of the distinguishing doctrines and peculiarities of Friends. On the contrary, the object sought, in putting Friends in possession of the annexed statement of facts and opinions, is

* In the original documents, there are many references to the course which particular individuals have felt it their duty to adopt, during their ministerial visits to America. These, for obvious reasons, have been omitted.

such a revival of their ancient and holy zeal in the cause of pure religion and practical piety, as shall wipe away the reproach, now cast upon a large portion of the Society, and shall render the Body, on both sides of the water, as conspicuous for self-denial, and the acting out of its great principles, as it was in the days when it renounced all participation in the oppressive systems of the nominally Christian world.

The grave and momentous character of the subjects now brought under notice, will, it is believed, be universally admitted ; whatever difference of opinion may exist, as to the value of the evidence brought forward to sustain certain allegations. The object of this pamphlet will be gained, if it leads to an impartial and complete examination of the whole matter, and to such expostulation and reproof, subsequently, as may seem to be demanded, by the circumstances of any who have failed in their duty, or have lost the spirit of HIM who was no respecter of persons, and who came to “preach deliverance to the captive.”

NOTE.—Friends, into whose hands the following documents may fall, are requested to lend them to those to whom, through inability, they may not have been sent. Copies may be obtained, gratis, on application to EDMUND FRY & SON, 4, Bishopsgate Street, London, to whom, also, reference may be made, by any who desire to inspect the Manuscripts, from which the Pamphlet has been compiled. 11

L E T T E R
FROM
W I L L I A M B A S S E T T ,

LYNN, MASS., U. S.

Lynn, Mass. U. S., 8 mo. 3, 1839.

DEAR FRIEND,

A FEW months since our mutual friend, * * * , showed me a letter from thee, in which thou asks for information in relation to the position which the Society of Friends in this country hold, with reference to the question of the Abolition of Slavery, and the course which it takes, respecting its own members, who are engaged in the Anti-slavery cause. * * * requested me to furnish thee with such information on these subjects as might be within my knowledge. I do not feel at liberty to decline doing so, for it has long seemed desirable to me, that our friends in England, should be informed of the existing state of things here, that they might exercise such influence as they may have with their brethren and sisters on this side the Atlantic, to produce a feeling among us more congenial to the spirit of true Christianity. I have heard the same desire expressed by others, and I trust it has not arisen from a disposition to lessen our society, or any of its members, in the esteem of our Trans-atlantic friends; but, from a sincere wish that, your strength might be put forth, to aid in removing the dishonour which we have suffered to settle upon the fair inheritance which has descended to us from our worthy predecessors in religious profession.

It is not without a struggle with a naturally ease-seeking disposition, that I have brought my mind to speak plainly of such things as I conceive to be wrong in the Society of which I am a member, and which, in days that are past, I have fondly hoped would shine forth with increased brightness, as a beacon to the world; but, I have felt

myself impelled by my love for its best interests, and still more by an apprehension of duty to the cause of truth, to interpose my feeble influence against the current which threatens to overwhelm our Society, and make it "a hissing and a bye-word" among the people.

It is difficult to convey to one, situated at so great a distance, such information as is necessary, in order to judge correctly of the true state of things. There are many little incidents continually occurring, each apparently unimportant in itself, which, in the aggregate, would go far, and properly too, to influence the judgment; but which, in the nature of things, cannot be communicated in this manner.

The Society of Friends in this country, as such, has done little or nothing towards agitating, enlightening, and purifying the public mind on the subject of Slavery. I never heard the subject alluded to, with this view, in any of our meetings, nor have I ever heard of any such discussion in any meeting of the Society, until it has been sometimes introduced, recently, by professed abolitionists, with how much effect the sequel may shew. We formerly in New England Yearly Meeting, had a query on the subject, something like this,—
 "Do Friends faithfully maintain their testimony against Slavery?" This was expunged some years since, and an advice substituted, to be read once a year in our preparative and monthly meetings, "that Friends maintain their testimony faithfully against Slavery." On these occasions, I have never known any expression to be elicited. The subject may have been incidentally alluded to in some of our public documents, but, if so, it has been passed over so slightly, as not to produce any impression, and, indeed, I am not aware that such has been the case. I believe, one or more of our Meetings for Sufferings did memorialize Congress several years since against the admission of Missouri into the Union, as a Slave State. And the Meeting for Sufferings of Virginia Yearly Meeting, in 1832, petitioned the Legislature of that State for some measures to be taken for the *gradual* abolition of Slavery, and for the *removal* of the emancipated from the State or Country! Besides these, I know of no public action in reference to the subject, with the exception of several addresses which have been issued by some of our Yearly Meetings, since the commencement of, and occasioned, as I believe, by the *external pressure* of the Anti-slavery Reform; and, in most or all of these, Friends have been especially careful to caution our members against moving in this matter, *except as the body should see fit*. In these remarks, I

would also except the action of a very small number of Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, in which abolitionists have had a sufficient influence to procure it. This has been the case, I believe, in one or more instances in the western part of New York Yearly Meeting, and in our own (Salem) Quarterly Meeting, to which I shall have occasion to refer. I think, I am not unjust or uncharitable in saying, that a general torpor and indifference, in relation to this vastly important subject, has prevailed among us; and we have been satisfied with the Society having prohibited its own members from holding slaves, (for which no credit is due to the present generation,) considering that, by that act, we had borne our "testimony faithfully against slavery." I may here mention, however, that the General Epistle of London Yearly Meeting, I think of 1829, which advised Friends "individually to co-operate with others," in the Anti-slavery cause, Temperance reform, and for other benevolent purposes, was printed and distributed by our Meeting for Sufferings, without comment, as has been usual. But it should be remembered, that this was previous to the commencement of the present Anti-slavery reform, and before the subject had begun to awaken public sentiment. Moreover, at that time, many Friends were connected with popular benevolent associations, even some of those who now most loudly and harshly denounce their fellow-members for acting in the same capacity. What has brought over them such a change? perhaps the information which will be laid before thee, may enable thee to judge. I may say, in passing, that until we were disturbed by the "*excitement*" of abolition, the propriety of Friends so associating, was scarcely questioned, and did not in any degree, interrupt the harmony of the Society. Those who doubted the expediency of such a course, governed themselves accordingly, leaving others in the free exercise of their consciences, and no jarring, no contention, was known among us.

For several years after the commencement of this great reform, it did not seem to claim much of the attention of Friends, as a body, the number of our members who were connected with it, being but small, and *not being among the most influential in the Society*; but, as the spirit of abolitionism more pervaded the Society, and the infection seemed to be extending *upwards* towards the higher class, the opposition to its influence increased. The opposition began to manifest itself in some of the leading members of this Yearly Meet-

ing, chiefly of a prominent Quarterly Meeting, at the time when our dear friend, J. Backhouse, was in this country, and I am satisfied that he was not a little exercised on account of it. The opposition was not merely against our *action*, but against our *principles*, as I think he will recollect, if he should be reminded of a discussion which he and Charles Stuart held with some of our friends at Newport, at the time of our Yearly Meeting. Here, I think, is still the groundwork of the difficulty to a very great extent. I believe Friends are not prepared to come up to the high ground of *Immediate, Unconditional Emancipation*. There is too much of that anti-christian prejudice among us, to admit our acknowledging "every man as our *brother*." I heard J. Backhouse say to a Friend, speaking of the Abolitionists, "See, that you do not lay a *finger* in the way of these men." * * * * But to return.

The position which I have held, has rendered me peculiarly obnoxious, and has made me, more, perhaps, than any other member of the Society in this country, the object of opposition; hence, I shall be under the necessity of speaking of myself, even at the risk of being considered *egotistical*. Although agreeing in the principles of Immediate Emancipation, and, from the first, sympathising with Garrison, the pioneer in the cause, yet, until within three years, I had withheld active participation, having been placed within the reach of adverse influences which I had suffered to control me. I was a Member of our Meeting for Sufferings, and of our Yearly Meeting Boarding School committee, besides holding various appointments in my own Quarterly and Monthly Meetings. Thus situated, I was brought much into contact with those who were most opposed to the Abolition movement, and under an influence not the most favourable for independent freedom of thought and action, and for imbibing a predominant feeling of *individual responsibility*. About three years since, I was led to reflect more on the importance of *action*, and felt as if I could not be much longer excused from it; still, however, looking to the Society as the medium through which our efforts must be made. In the winter of 1836-7, several of the able advocates of the cause, visited our town, and I was induced to attend some of the meetings, and the irresistible appeals which I then heard, had the effect to enlist my feelings and sympathies more strongly in the great enterprise, and after serious reflection and deep exercise of mind, I came to the conclusion that

I could no longer stand aloof, but that I had *individual duties* to perform, from which my connexion with the Society of Friends could not absolve me. I had previously, as an Overseer of our Monthly Meeting, united in a decision refusing the use of our meeting house for lectures on the subject, by W. L. Garrison and H. B. Stanton. I now became uneasy with the stand we had taken, and communicated my feelings to the other Overseers, whereupon, we again met and reversed our decision, and granted the use of the house for that purpose. Strong feelings of disapprobation were now manifest from a very few members of our meeting, among them a Minister, whose influence, has, perhaps, more than all others, contributed to array against us the opposition with which we are contending. On conversing with him about this time, he made an expression like this,—“There is so much corruption amongst the Abolitionists, that the few conscientious men among them, cannot save them from destruction;” and spoke in a very contemptuous manner of calling on one, “not a member of our Society, to teach *Friends* their duty,” &c. Said that it was like employing a Clergyman to preach for us, instead of our own ministers, &c. I introduce such examples with no invidious design, but that thou may better judge of the character of the opposition.

At our Yearly Meeting in 1837, a proposition was received from Salem Quarterly Meeting, that the Yearly Meeting memorialise Congress for the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia. Without any discussion, the subject was referred to the Meeting for Sufferings. It was entered, in course, on their minutes, and was called up at each meeting of that body for the ensuing year, and a minute made that, “*no way opened to act.*” At this same Yearly Meeting, the situation of the Indians of this country was introduced into the meeting, which at once excited apparently a lively interest, and elicited an animated debate, which resulted in the prompt appointment of a committee. I could not help remarking the striking contrast between an *Indian* philanthropy and a *Negro* philanthropy, and asking myself, why this difference? Is it possible that it is because one is a *popular benevolence*, and the other is denounced by the great and worldly-wise, as a dream of visionary enthusiasm? Whenever the cause of the suffering *red man* has been brought before us, we have never heard it put by, because “*no way opened*” to administer to his relief! I had previously heard, in the Meeting

for Sufferings, the discussion of the Slavery question in the Yearly Meeting deprecated as a thing necessary to be guarded against; and the course now taken, was in strict keeping with such a recommendation.

At the same time, the Meeting for Sufferings presented an address on Slavery, rehearsing what our Society had done—how it had rid itself of the evil; and how it had constantly and consistently borne its testimony to the present time, and calling on other denominations to follow our example, while no allusion was made to the efforts making by others; which was directed to be printed and circulated. After being once read, a minister who had been somewhat active in the Anti-Slavery cause, requested that it might have a second reading, which is very common with important documents, and which I never before knew refused. He was immediately replied to by another minister, an influential member of the Meeting for Sufferings, who observed, that, if the Friend's object was, to produce any discussion, he should *object*, for it had generally been the case that, when documents prepared by the Meeting for Sufferings, had been altered by the Yearly Meeting, they had generally been made worse! This course was adopted, *and the second reading refused!* At the same meeting, the subject of opening our Meeting-houses for Anti-Slavery lectures &c., was brought before the meeting, which after a rapid expression in favor, resulted in issuing an advice *against* opening them in future for lectures, for those—"who differ from us in sentiment on some subjects that we consider of primary importance." This was introduced by a minister from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, in relation to which, a friend and minister of our Yearly Meeting said, after meeting, "well, we can afford to pay * * * well for this half-day's work." Under this advice, the doors of our Meeting-houses are barred against the advocates of God's suffering poor; and even our own Members have been refused the use of our House at Lynn, for a meeting on this interesting subject. The ground taken is, that although such a meeting is not *literally* prohibited, yet that it was the *intention* to exclude all meetings for that purpose! At this Yearly Meeting, I was on the Committee on Correspondence, and the occurrences which there came under my notice, confirmed me in the opinion I had already formed, of a want of correct *feeling* among Friends on this subject. To me was committed an Epistle from Virginia Yearly Meeting, to

prepare an essay in reply. I produced such an one as I thought proper, at a subsequent sitting of the Committee, in which their attention was called to their Slave population, and they exhorted not to be prevented by the fear of man, from faithfully advocating their cause ; introducing an appropriate quotation from the writings of John Woolman. The criticism which this essay underwent, was an index of the state of feeling which prevails too much among those who are most prominent in our Yearly Meeting. The terms, "*brethren*" and "*fellow-countrymen*," as applied to the Slaves, were objected to, because, it was said that, "we must be careful what language we use, for this may not be confined among Friends, but may get out at the South !" These objections were sustained, and other words substituted, and a large proportion of the essay stricken out.

Those who opposed our proceedings, evidently derived strength and encouragement from this Yearly Meeting. Prominent friends, talked of the consequences of our persisting in our course in the Anti-Slavery cause : it was said that, probably, the next Yearly Meeting would go further, and Friends would be prohibited from joining such associations ; and, that if we did not change our course, we should be disowned from Society. Soon after this, I received a letter from a member of a neighbouring Yearly Meeting, protesting against Friends joining Anti-Slavery Societies, with sundry reasons. Similar objections having been so often reiterated, it was thought advisable by some of my friends, that my reply should be made public, to which I did not feel at liberty to object. Accordingly, in the Autumn of that year, it was issued from the press. As a literary performance, I am sensible it is of a very low order, and I have much regretted that the task had not fallen to the lot of some one, better qualified to present the arguments, in a clear, logical, and forcible manner : but I still insist on our *right* to avail ourselves of such means, to make our sentiments known ; indeed, I think we should be criminally negligent, did we omit to improve such opportunities as present, to endeavour to stay the tide which is so strongly setting in, against what we believe to be Christian efforts, for the removal of such an enormity as American Slavery. I have since thought more accurately on the subject, and were I now to be called to a similar service, I might, perhaps, avoid some of the imperfections of that work.

That publication has brought upon me much censure. Soon

after its appearance, I received a letter from a beloved friend, in high standing in the Society, expressing his disapprobation, because, he says, it encourages—“*a violation of the fundamental principles of our Society.*” I answered his letter; and referred to the example of Friends, who had for years been connected with similar associations; and to the practice of Friends in England, to whose proceedings this objection would apply with equal force; and asked him whether *they* did not understand our fundamental principles; to which, he did not deign to reply. A new construction is put upon our Discipline, by some, to meet the exigencies of the present time, which would prohibit us from writing for publication, on any moral subject, on which the Society professes to have a Testimony, without laying it before the Meeting for Sufferings. In the Second month, 1838, at a Meeting for Sufferings which I attended, one of the members stated, that a publication had recently appeared, written by a member of that body, which, he thought, required attention. It was concluded, after some expression in favour of the course, to appoint a Committee; but *no minute was made* in relation to it. I understand that, they reported at a subsequent meeting, that some care was necessary; and that, consequently, they were continued; but no minute was made at this time. I heard nothing official from the Committee until the Third month last, when I received a letter from one of their number, requesting me to meet them, at a distance of fifty miles from my residence. I declined the interview, for several reasons:—1st. That the whole proceeding was informal, no regular appointment having been made, and no specific charge having been presented. 2nd. That it was extra-judicial, they having no authority to deal with me, provided I had transgressed any order of Society; my own Monthly Meeting being the only authority empowered to take disciplinary action in the case: and, 3rd. That I had not violated any rule of our discipline, and therefore ought to be exempt from the odium implied in their unofficial and informal proceedings. At our late Yearly Meeting, on reading the minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings, it appeared that the Committee aforesaid made a report, which was approved by the meeting, in which I am informed that the letter is condemned, in that it maintains that our Society is not, strictly speaking, an Abolition Society; and, in that it alleges that prejudice against colour exists among Friends in this country; both of which points, I think, can

be made sufficiently clear to satisfy any candid mind. In relation to prejudice, I have abundant evidence, some of which I propose to advert to hereafter. I know not how to reply, understandingly, to this report, as I was not at the Yearly Meeting, and I presume a copy of it cannot be obtained.* I may not fully understand the purport of it, but, if I am not misinformed, it is equivalent to a charge of *falsehood*, which I am not permitted to meet, as I understand no further action is contemplated. When I entered the Anti-Slavery cause, I counted upon the loss of my *reputation* in our Society, and I have not been disappointed. At the Yearly Meeting of 1838, my name was dropped from the Meeting for Sufferings, and there have since been many unequivocal indications of such a consequence. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, when the mere act of becoming a member of an Anti-Slavery Society, or of attending an Anti-Slavery Meeting, is considered disorderly, by many of our most influential members? I have not hesitated to remonstrate with Friends for their inconsistency, and to bear my testimony against such measures as I have conceived to be wrong; feeling that I could remain in the Society, only on condition that I discharge my duty towards it in such a manner; and, in so doing, I have, in some instances, made the Anti-Slavery papers the medium of communications. For thus—"exposing the *weaknesses* of the Society," as it is called, I have been repeatedly reprimanded; and it has been more than hinted, that a loss of my membership must be the consequence, if I persist. And yet, my dear friend, how can one keep silence, when corruption threatens to overwhelm even the fairest portion of the visible church? If we should hold our peace, would not the very stones cry out? To lose one's influence in the Society, it is not necessary to become a member of an Anti-Slavery Society, or to attend lectures, but it is sufficient, openly to defend the course of those who do. I speak now of our own vicinity, where, I think, the prejudice is quite as strong as in any part of the country. At our last Yearly Meeting, so many Abolitionists were left off of appointments which they had held for years, that there cannot be a doubt of the design.

* In a letter subsequently received, W. B. says,—“In my former letter to thee, I informed thee of the proceedings of the Meeting for Sufferings in relation to my printed “Letter,” &c. I have since applied to that body for a copy of the Report made by the committee on that subject, that I might be enabled to meet the charges there made; but, as I expected, they have declined granting what seems to me so reasonable a request.”

The active and determined opposition to Abolitionists was, for a time, confined pretty much to a small number of Friends ; but those, were of a class who had long been accustomed to have their opinions received with a deference, which is not awarded to ordinary members. Owing, as I conceive, to partial and prejudiced representations, backed up by "weight of character," this influence has gradually extended itself, so as to include many honest individuals, who have not taken pains to investigate the subject for themselves ; until, the current has become so powerful, as to overcome another large class of Society, who agree with us in sentiment, and secretly approve of our measures, and have formerly expressed their opinions ; but who, from various reasons, such as, a want of moral courage, a morbid desire to preserve the peace and unity of the Society, and perhaps, in some cases, a wish to maintain their good reputation, have yielded their deliberate convictions, and have actually suffered their influence to go against us.

Our Yearly Meeting, this year, has issued an Epistle of advice to its Members, in which they allude to the importance of our Testimony to the influence of the Holy Spirit—which they fear will be lowered, by joining with others, in Associations for the abolition of Slavery, for the promotion of Temperance, and of Peace, which they say are *religious* testimonies, and *therefore*, they persuade their Members not to join such Associations. I have not a doubt that, this will be followed up by a rule, making it a disciplinary offence, and even some go so far now, as to give this advice a construction, by which Members may be disowned for refusing compliance. How humiliating, when viewed in contrast with the noble stand taken by Friends in your land ! And does the spirit of truth lead in such opposite directions ? Several other Yearly Meetings have taken similar ground. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issued similar advice two years ago, which however, has not been enforced, and is disregarded by large numbers. Indiana Yearly Meeting, last year, put forth a document of like character, and gives, as a reason for such advice, the following, viz. " Our standard of morality and religion is a high and holy standard ; in associating with others not of our Society for promoting benevolent objects, this standard has often been lowered. Something objectionable may have been adopted,—some peculiarity we deem it important to maintain, may have been abandoned."

The objections made to our engaging in this cause are various. One very prominent one is, that it is inconsistent with the views of Friends on the immediate influence of the Spirit. Lecturing on slavery, or other moral subjects, is placed on the same ground as preaching the gospel. I have heard some of our leading members say, that for a Friend to *premeditate* a lecture on slavery, or any other moral subject, was a violation of our testimony in relation to the ministry ; that, consistently with our principles, none but those who are called to the work of the ministry, could deliver public discourses on such subjects ; that, as it is considered improper for a minister to make a previous engagement to preach ; therefore, an appointment for an address on slavery, or any similar subject, would be inconsistent ; and, that the mere circumstance of a Friend's proposing to deliver such an address, was conclusive evidence that he was unsound in principle ! I have heard this ground taken by some of the most prominent members of New England Yearly Meeting. It follows, then, that to pay an Anti-Slavery agent, is equally inconsistent, as to contribute to a hireling ministry ; and that it is as much a violation of the order of our Society to attend Anti-Slavery and Temperance Meetings, as to attend the meetings for worship, of other denominations ! These views seem to prevail among us to a considerable extent, and to have given rise to the advice which has just been issued from our Yearly Meeting. It seems to me to be a palpable perversion of a doctrine, which I hope to see maintained in all its original simplicity and purity. Again, it is said that, as the immediate influence of the Spirit is not so fully acknowledged by other people generally as by Friends, there is danger, in associating with such persons, of neglecting this important qualification, and of proceeding "in our own wills," and "in our own strength." An objection, conclusive with some, is, that while the Society does not see its way clear to act, it is unsafe for individual members to move in advance of the body. Another objection is, that, in some instances, Anti-Slavery meetings have been opened with prayer. On this subject, the facts are these :—In the local Societies in which Friends are associated, I do not know of an instance where such a practice prevails ; and I have been surprised at the great influence which we have in these Societies in proportion to our numbers. In the larger Meetings, I have never known of an instance where there has been any action of the Society on the subject. When any

person has been invited, it has been by the presiding officer on his own responsibility, and Friends have not felt themselves accountable for a proceeding in which they have not, in any degree, participated. In many of the Meetings, and this was the case at the last Meeting of the National Society, the presiding officer has not given any personal invitation, but has intimated that, if any person felt called upon to pray, there was liberty to do so. Again, we have been told that such associating, would have a tendency to lead us to compromise the Testimonies of the Society, in relation to its *outward peculiarities*—moreover, that still greater departures from our faith would be the consequence, as it is said, has been the case in England. The late division in the Society there, has been attributed to the connexion of Friends, with others, in the benevolent Associations of the day. Then, besides these, are the common objections of, *excitement, hard language, &c. &c.*

One or two more particulars respecting the action of the Society on the subject of Slavery. At our Monthly Meeting in the 8th Month, 1837, I introduced a proposition that we recommend to the Quarterly Meeting, to memorialize Congress against the annexation of Texas to this government; a measure which was then evidently in contemplation, and which, the friends of freedom had reason to fear would be speedily consummated. The proposition received the approbation of the Monthly Meeting; and when it reached the Quarterly Meeting, it was united with, there, by the great body of Friends, and a Memorial was accordingly adopted; though objections were made by several Members of a Yearly Meeting committee present, (Members of the Meeting for Sufferings) on the ground that, perhaps the Meeting for Sufferings might be inclined to take the subject up, and this movement might have a tendency to obstruct the way for action by that body. At a subsequent Monthly Meeting, a proposition was made by an Abolition Friend that, the Meeting should suggest for the consideration of the Meeting for Sufferings, the expediency of aiding in circulating information in relation to the successful result of the great experiment of West India Emancipation; an object in which it was thought, all could unite. The Monthly Meeting adopted the proposition; but the measure was stifled at the threshold of the Meeting for Sufferings. Such results of our efforts have very much discouraged us from further attempts to produce any effective action by the Society.

The course which "THE FRIEND," published in Philadelphia, has taken in regard to this subject, I think is worthy of remark. True, there has recently been introduced into its pages, articles on the subject of Slavery, yet it has never been committed at all, in favor of the Anti-Slavery cause, as we should desire it might be. During eight years contest, there is scarcely a line to be found in that periodical, intimating that such a reform is in progress. While it frequently notices Temperance meetings, and meetings of Peace societies, and inserts their official documents, and gives various information in relation to the progress of these great reforms; such information respecting the Anti-Slavery enterprise seems to be carefully excluded.

* * * * *

Indeed, until recently, the tone of that journal has been decidedly favorable to Colonization; and articles in favor of that unrighteous scheme have not been of rare occurrence. I think the course pursued by "THE FRIEND," furnishes a tolerably correct index of the public sentiment of the Society in this country.

Prejudice against Color exists among Friends here, perhaps to as great an extent as in the community at large. In this immediate vicinity, it has not been so conspicuously developed as in some of our Southern cities, where Colored people are more numerous, and more in the practice of attending Friends' meetings. It is true, as stated in my printed letter, to which I have before alluded, that separate seats are assigned to those whose complexions are a shade darker than ours, in the houses appropriated to the worship of Him, who has made of *one blood* all nations of men. I have abundant evidence in my possession of the existence of this unchristian prejudice, which I deem it unnecessary to furnish thee with, presuming that * * * will put thee in possession of all needful testimony on this point. One circumstance, however, I cannot well forbear mentioning. It was related to me when on a visit at * * * this spring. At a certain meeting of Friends, where quite a number of Colored persons attend, they have, for a great many years, occupied a separate, assigned seat. Within a few months, a young friend, of good character, who has been much interested in behalf of this oppressed portion of the community, deemed it his duty to take his seat on the bench with the Colored men. Immediately after first taking his seat there, he was severely reprimanded by a *Minister* of that Meeting, who told him

that, in so doing, he was "*sitting in judgment against the Monthly Meeting!*" He also called on an aged Colored man, who has from his youth attended that Meeting, and asked him, why, when that young man came into the seat with him, he had not KICKED HIM OUT!!! I had this account from the lips of this dear Colored brother. To the credit of the young man above alluded to, he continues to sit on the degraded seat, and has recently been joined by another devoted young Friend.

* * * * *

In giving thee this statement, if I know my own heart, I entertain none but the kindest feelings towards any of whom I have spoken; but, under existing circumstances, I feel called upon to use great plainness of speech. Oh! I wish that you might be made fully acquainted with the unhappy condition in which the Society is placed, by its position in reference to this subject; and that a voice might come across the great waters, faithfully rebuking the inconsistency of its proceedings.

* * * * *

That you may, under the direction of Best Wisdom, be encouraged to continue your labours, until your ears shall be greeted with the joyful Jubilee of Universal Emancipation, is the wish of

Thy sincere friend,

WILLIAM BASSETT.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER, BY WILLIAM BASSETT,
DATED 12 Mo. 11, 1839.

WE find ourselves, my friend, in this country, engaged in a contest of vastly greater magnitude, than one merely for the physical Emancipation of our brethren and sisters, in bonds, much as we feel devoted to their cause.

We, who entered that warfare with a single view to the Slave's redemption, soon learned that *our* liberties were bound up in *his*; and we found ourselves engaged in a conflict for *our own mental Enfranchisement*. We found "*the Church*" interposing its influence to prevent the free exercise of the power, which is placed in our hands, for the good of our race. It has assumed the right to control the consciences of its members; that they should not put forth

their energies, but at its bidding. And, not the hindermost in this inglorious warfare, is the Society of Friends ! that Society, which, in its early days, accomplished so much for human freedom.

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Doctrines are now openly preached among us, which I must utterly repudiate. The ground is distinctly taken, that we must wait for a *special revelation*, to warrant us in performing the *common duties of humanity* ! Ministers have, in repeated instances, told us, that the witnessing of wickedness or suffering, was no reason for our engaging in measures to remove them ! “ Working in our own strength,” has become a *cant phrase* ; and, as it is used, is a very convenient excuse for indolence. What was the condemnation of the Priest and Levite formerly ? Was it, that they had no express command to relieve him who had fallen among thieves ? Or, was it sufficient that they saw a fellow-creature in suffering, and neglected to administer to his necessities ?

I have recently heard a minister enforce the doctrine, that the present is a time wherein the Christian is called “ *to suffer rather than to labour* ;” advising us to be quiet, while there is so much *excitement* in the world, &c. It seems to me, that this is a most dangerous idea, and one which the enemy of all good would rejoice to see prevail. *A time to suffer, rather than to labour* ! How preposterous ! I believe there never was, and never will be, a time, whilst evil exists in the world, for the Christian to be idle. His life must be a continual scene of labour and warfare. “ *To suffer, rather than to labour* ! What suffering is there in a state of *quiescence* ! The suffering to which the Christian is called, is, “ to endure hardness as a *good soldier* ;” to be a co-worker with Christ in the renovation of a world lying in wickedness. A dogma now insisted on, by many, high in authority amongst us, is, that of *unconditional obedience to the decrees of the Society*,—denying individuals the right of private judgment. This is the “ *dernier resort*,” which is relied upon to silence us when we call in question the advice of our Yearly Meeting, against associating with others for benevolent purposes. It is said, that we have no right to take exceptions to the doings of “ *the body*.”

By the foregoing remarks, thou wilt see that the warfare which is now agitating the Society in this land, is one for great *principles* ; and we cannot suffer any consideration of expediency, to turn us

aside from a fearless advocacy and defence of the right. Our motto must be the advice of one of Freedom's Sons,—"*Peace, if possible; but Truth at any rate.*" I am convinced, that there is much more spiritual freedom in the Society in your land, than on this side of the water; that, with you, in Church, as well as in State, *human rights* are better understood, and more fully acknowledged, than in this land of boasted liberty; that with you, circumstances have been such, as to keep the energies of the Society more actively employed, by which a healthy circulation has been promoted, and the life of the body, in a greater degree, preserved.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM A FRIEND, DATED MOUNT PLEASANT,
OHIO, 9 MO. 4., 1839.

NEARLY sixty years ago, many of the most valuable Friends in our several Yearly Meetings, took a very active part, as pioneers, in forming Anti-Slavery Associations, composed of Friends, and various other religious professors. These several Associations, first annually, and afterwards biennially, elected Delegates, to meet in a "National Convention, for promoting the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery, and for improving the condition of the African Race."

Through their instrumentality, our National Government, in 1807, abolished the legalized Foreign Slave Trade; and seven out of thirteen original States of the Union, have decreed universal Emancipation within their respective limits. All of which, I believe, was accomplished by the Divine blessing, upon the combined efforts of Friends and others, united and acting harmoniously together, with a single eye to the glory of God, and the improvement and happiness of his creature, man. Christian Philanthropists, seeing the glorious result of these voluntary Associations, had their attention directed to this mode of doing good, and the establishment of many benevolent Associations for improving the condition of the human race, has been the result. Among these, the American Bible Society may be regarded as one of the most important. At the organization of that Society, some of our most worthy Friends co-operated, * * * * and then (as far as I am informed) for the

first time was an objection raised to Friends associating, with other professors, in objects of Christian benevolence.

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The Yearly Meetings of Philadelphia and New England, have, in terms, advised their Members not to associate with other people for the promotion of this cause ; * * * * and now we are actually threatened with disownment, unless we discontinue our connection with the Anti-Slavery Associations, which we cannot do, because we are persuaded, that Slavery was sustained in the British Colonies by the power of a corrupt public sentiment in England ; and that, by the active and zealous co-operation of Friends with others, that public sentiment was corrected, and Slavery thereby abolished ; and that if Friends had not thus co-operated in this great work, generations yet unborn, in the British Isles, would have lived and died Slaveholders and Slaves, and that their blood would have been charged upon the heads of those to whom the Word of the Lord, for their deliverance, had come, but who obeyed it not. And we believe, that Slavery in our country is sustained precisely in the same way ; and that the Word of the Almighty, for their deliverance, has come to *us*, and we dare not rebel against it. Friends are regarded by our countrymen generally, as the peculiar friends of the people of color, and their hostility to the Anti-Slavery enterprise, is, therefore, regarded by many as, evidence that this enterprise is not in accordance with the real interest of the Slaves ; and thus, by their peculiar position under the Anti-Slavery reputation, which the Society has acquired by the faithful labors of the last generation, the Society now stands as a mountain in the way of this most righteous cause. Will not the Yearly Meeting, or the Meeting for Sufferings in London, send us an Epistle upon this subject, that shall quicken our minds, and awaken our consciences to a sense of our great obligations to carry on the great and good work to which our Society, in the days of our fathers, was so signally called ?

IN a letter, addressed by William Bassett, to a Member of the Society of Friends, published at Boston, in 1837, he observes :—
 “The Anti-Slavery Society, has waged an exterminating warfare

against that malignant spirit, which is crushing the colored man to the earth, and preventing his moral elevation, viz. *Prejudice against Colour*. That this cruel prejudice exists to some extent among the Members of that Society, which has long professed to be, above all others, the colored man's friend, evidence is not wanting. It will be allowed, that the '*Negro Pew*,' or its equivalent, may be found in some of our Meeting-houses, where men and women, brothers and sisters by creation, and heirs of the same glorious immortality, are *seated by themselves, on a back bench*, for no other reason but because it has pleased their Creator to give them a complexion darker than our own !

" I believe that an awful accountability rests upon us, for the repulsive effect of our conduct on our colored brethren and sisters, by which, tender, seeking spirits among them, have been deeply wounded. I have in my possession, some affecting accounts, exhibiting the effect of this sinful prejudice on the susceptible minds of those who have been brought under its influences."

A YOUNG woman of Colour, in a letter to William Bassett, says, in allusion to the above paragraph :—" I can set my seal to its truth—and as you request to know particularly about * * * * Meeting, I may say the experience of years has made me wise in this fact, that there is a bench set apart at that Meeting for our people, whether *officially* appointed or not, I cannot say ; but this I am free to say, that my mother and myself were told to sit there, and that a friend sat at each end of the bench to prevent white persons from sitting there. And even when a child, my soul was made sad by hearing five or six times, during the course of one meeting, this language of remonstrance addressed to those who were willing to sit by us,—' This bench is for the black people : '—This bench is for the people of colour ;' and often-times I wept—at other times I felt indignant, and queried in my own mind, are these people Christians ? Now, it seems clear to me, that had not this bench been set apart for oppressed Americans, there would have been no necessity for this oft repeated and galling remonstrance.

" In reply to your question, ' Whether there appears to be a diminution of prejudice towards us, among Friends,' I unhesita-

tingly answer, *NO*. I have heard it frequently remarked, and have observed it myself, that in proportion as we become intellectual and respectable, so in proportion does their disgust and prejudice increase."

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER, RECEIVED FROM
A HIGHLY RESPECTABLE CORRESPONDENT IN AMERICA.

* * * * * a Female of Colour who has been for years convinced of the principles of Friends,—has adopted their dress and language, and goes to their Meetings constantly,—*has been advised not to apply to be received into Membership, as she would be REJECTED*. This advice has been given in tenderness, to spare her feelings; but I regret that she abided by it; because, I am willing we should *act out* our feelings towards this oppressed class. She has mentioned this to me, with deep feeling, and remarked, "The hardest lesson my Heavenly Father ever set me to learn, was to love Friends; and in anguish of spirit I have often queried, why the Lord should require me to go among a people who despise me on account of my complexion; but I have seen that it is designed to humble me, and to teach me the lesson, 'Love your enemies, and pray for them who spitefully use you.'"

AN aged man, of undoubted piety, who had lived many years in the family of an Elder of * * * * Meeting, requested to be received into Membership. *He was rejected*. An Overseer of that Meeting, told * * * *, that the *only* reason was, because *he was colored*: for his character, as a religious man, was unquestioned, and he was fully convinced of our principles. This thing was done privately, and elicited no condemnation that I know of.

The following letter, from the young woman before referred to, addressed to * * * * furnishes an affecting corroboration of the truth of William Bassett's remarks:—

MY DEAR * * * *

You ask me for some account of my beloved Brother, and his trials: it is a sadly pleasing theme, and I hasten to tell you what I can recollect. My brother Charles was naturally sensitive, and felt

more keenly than any of us, the prejudice against color ; but most of all, the conduct of professing Christians was a stumbling-block to him, particularly their behaviour in their Meeting-Houses to our people. *It drove him to the very verge of Infidelity.* Many times, stung almost to madness by their contempt, he has been ready to curse them, and in the bitterness of his heart, exclaimed "there is no reality in religion, 'tis all a fable, or why do Christians act thus ?" When quite a child, he, with the rest of the family, went to Friends' Meeting ; but, as he grew to man's estate, the Cross, of being seated on the *back bench* on account of his complexion, was too heavy to bear, and, with Mother's permission, he went to Meeting with Father, among the Presbyterians. It was manifest, however, that he did not grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his constant reply, when spoken to on religious subjects, was, " 'tis all a fable ; if it is not, why do the people act thus ?" He continued in this state of mind until his 19th year, when it pleased the Lord to lay on him the rod of affliction. As his health declined, his lion-like temper was subdued, and he became a little child in meekness. He no longer scoffed and jested at the conduct of Christians, but mourned in secret over their unkindness. The Church of which my Father was a member, was without a Pastor, and on sabbath morning, a little company assembled in the Church to read the scriptures and to pray, and for the two last years of his life, my dear Charles was a constant attendant, kindly assisting the aged and illiterate of his own people, by reading the scriptures to them ; and so carefully did he conceal from his left hand, what his right was doing, that many of his friends knew nothing of it until he had ceased to live and mourn. As his bodily strength decreased, his mind turned towards the Society of Friends, to the religion of his childhood ; but he stumbled at the Cross, and went away sorrowful. A few months before his death, Mother accompanied him to * * * * for change of air, and once or twice he went with her to Friends' Meeting, and found comfort in going, and remarked,— " if they did not despise me so, I should like to go always." Oh ! if Friends only knew the anguish this one common expression of theirs, "*this bench is for the black people :*"—"*This bench is for the People of Color,*" inflicts on the sensitive and tender amongst us : if they knew how it shuts up the springs of life, and causes us to turn away from their Meetings, weary and unrefreshed, they would not,

they could not use it so often. Oh! surely the darkness that might be felt, has enveloped their minds on this point.

I had been at home just one week, when Charles was stretched on his sick bed, never to leave it in life. He said, he was quite willing to die, if he could see his way clear. He felt that he was a great sinner. Mother told him,—“Not the righteous,—*Sinners*, Jesus came to save;” and recommended him to cast his burden on Him, and, blessed be God, he was enabled so to do. I had been deeply concerned for my brother, and pleaded earnestly with the Lord for a satisfactory evidence of his acceptance, promising to give him up freely, if I could have this; and He was mercifully pleased to grant it. He bore his intense sufferings without a murmur. Our beloved friend and physician, * * * * * said, that he had never in the course of his long practice, seen but one person who endured pain with so much patience and fortitude. He received every thing we gave him, even the disagreeable medicines, with so much thankfulness, that we all felt it a privilege to be near him, and to administer to his wants. A few evenings before his decease, the doctor ordered fresh applications of mercurial ointment. When he was gone, Charles said pleasantly, “Mother, doctor will not let me go *home* to night.” The next day, as he lay groaning with weakness, he turned his dear, languid eyes on Mother, and said, “Is Christ in the vessel?” She replied, “Yes, my dear son, and though the tempest rages, and hides His face, He does not slumber, He is watching over thee.” When almost fainting with pain, he said, “Oh Lord Jesus, take me to thine everlasting arms of love.” The day following, the adversary of souls was permitted to buffet him, and to fill his mind with doubts, and he prayed fervently, “Oh Lord, let not the enemy of souls pluck this little lamb from thy fold.” That evening, when at prayers, I kneeled beside him with his hand clasped in mine. At the conclusion of the prayer, he raised his head from his pillow, and said, “I have had some doubts; but, glory to God, all is clear *now*,” and throwing his arms round my neck, he pressed his lips to my forehead, and prayed, “Oh Lord, grant my dear brothers and sister as full an assurance of *their* acceptance.” The next day, this passage of scripture was given him, “Neither heights nor depths, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.” No cloud arose after this, to hide his Lord, for one moment, from

his eyes; and, on the morning of the 1st of September, 1835, he fell asleep, sweetly murmuring, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

During the whole of his illness, his intellect shone out strong and clear, so that our neighbours and friends did greatly marvel: and when the cold grave had hidden him from our view, testimonials of his moral worth, his cultivated understanding, and affectionate disposition, poured in upon us daily; and we could not but rejoice, that one so young, so beloved, and so respected, had escaped from the suffering inflicted by scorn and prejudice, and the varied trials which belong to humanity. Still, his death has left an aching void, and nature demands her tears.

We miss him when the board is spread;
We miss him when the prayer is said;
Upon our dreams, his dying eyes,
In still and mournful fondness rise.

Please excuse inaccuracies, as I have been interrupted frequently. Your sympathy is invaluable. May the Lord bless you and our beloved * * * *